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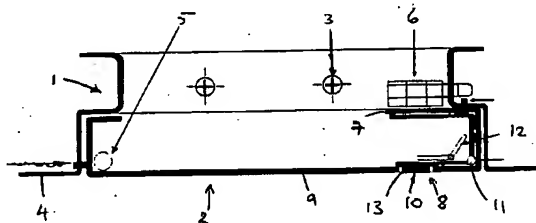
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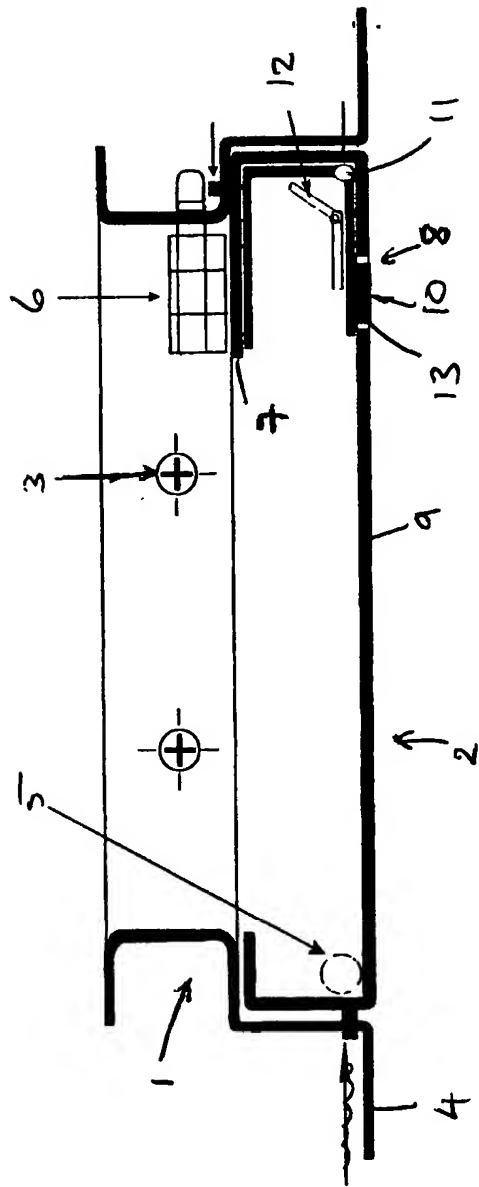
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(54) Abstract Title: **Access panel**

(57) An access panel for mounting in an aperture in a false wall or ceiling comprises a frame 1, a door 2 mounted within the frame 1 and a lock or catch 6 mounted on a face 7 on a first side of the door 2 and engageable with the frame 1 to secure the door 2 in a closed position within the frame 1. The lock or catch 6 is accessible from the second side of the door 2 through an aperture in the door 2 which is normally closed by an escutcheon 10. The escutcheon 10 may be pivotable about a hinge or pivot pin 11 enabling it to swing away from the second side of the door 2. The escutcheon 10 may be resiliently biased towards the aperture. The escutcheon 10 may define a projection which fills the aperture when the escutcheon 10 is in the closed position. The door may be double skinned having the lock or catch 6 mounted on a first skin whilst the aperture is formed in the front skin.





DESCRIPTION"AN ACCESS PANEL"

The present invention relates to an access panel for use in false walls and ceilings.

5 More specifically, the present invention relates to an access panel of the type comprising a door mounted within a frame, which door is secured closed within the frame by means of a catch or lock.

When installing false walls and ceilings in a building it is common practice to run utilities and services behind them. This serves both to conceal the utilities and services,
10 thereby maintaining a favourable view, and to prevent unnecessary and unauthorised access to the utilities and services. Typically, electrical cables, plumbing, telephone lines and computer cables are run behind false walls and ceilings or in voids in the wall or ceiling construction.

Occasionally it is necessary to gain access to the utilities and services which are
15 hidden behind a false wall or ceiling. For this purpose it is known to provide access panels in the wall or ceiling. One such known access panel comprises a frame which is fixedly mounted in an appropriately sized aperture in the wall or ceiling and a door which is hinged in the frame. To ensure that the door remains closed in the frame, a lock or catch is provided on the rear surface of the door which is operable to engage with the
20 frame. The lock or catch is accessed through a hole in the outer surface of the door. In order to discourage unauthorised access to the lock or catch, and to maintain the aesthetic appearance of the door, a removable plastic plug is fitted in the hole.

The provision of a removable plug in the surface of the door is not entirely satisfactory. Firstly, there is a tendency for the plug to be removed from the door and then lost or misplaced; the plug must then be replaced to close the hole and maintain the aesthetic appearance of the door. Secondly, the plug tends to stand out in the surface of the door which detracts from the aesthetic appearance of the door and serves as a focal point for unauthorised tampering with the door.

It is an object of the present invention to provide an access panel for use in a false wall or ceiling in which the aforementioned disadvantages associated with conventional access panels are obviated or substantially overcome.

It is another object of the present invention to provide an access panel for use in false walls or ceilings in which the aperture in the front surface of the door thereof, through which access to a lock or catch is gained, is concealed.

According to the present invention there is provided an access panel comprising a frame adapted in use to be mounted in an aperture in a false wall or ceiling, a door mounted within the frame, and a lock or catch mounted on a rear surface of the door and engageable with the frame to secure the door in a closed position within the frame, which lock or catch is accessible through an aperture in the front surface of the door, wherein the said aperture is normally closed by an escutcheon mounted behind the said aperture.

In use, access to the lock or catch is achieved by pushing on the escutcheon through the aperture. Conveniently, the escutcheon is pivotable about a hinge or pivot pin so that it swings rearwardly from the aperture to allow unimpeded access to the lock or catch lying beyond it. Preferably, the escutcheon is resiliently biased towards the said

aperture so that it is normally closed by it. Conveniently, the escutcheon defines a projection of the same shape and thickness as the aperture, which projection engages in the said aperture when the escutcheon is in the normally closed position. The outwardly facing surface of the said projection may match that of the front surface of the door so that the aperture is effectively concealed when the escutcheon is in the normally closed position.

In a preferred embodiment of the present invention the door is double-skinned and the lock or catch is mounted on the rear skin thereof, whilst the said aperture is formed in the front skin thereof. The escutcheon is positioned between the two skins and is pivotable away from the said aperture into the space defined between the two skins.

Conveniently, the door is hinged to the frame.

An embodiment of the present invention will now be described, by way of example, with reference to the accompanying drawing which shows a schematic cross-sectional view of an access panel in accordance with the present invention.

Referring to the drawing there is shown an access panel comprising a picture frame 1 and a door 2 mounted within the opening defined by the frame 1. The sectional profile of the frame 1 is such as to allow it to be located within an aperture formed in a false wall or ceiling with the front surface of the frame 1 flush with the front surface of the wall or ceiling. The frame 1 is secured in place within the aperture by inserting fixing screws through fixing holes 3 in the sides of the frame 1 into the hangers supporting the wall or ceiling. The edges of the aperture are concealed by a facing flange 4 which extends around the frame 1.

The door 2 is mounted to the frame 1 so as to be pivotable or hinged about a pivot point 5, thus allowing the access panel to be opened and closed. In the closed position the door is secured within the frame 1 by means of a lock or catch 6 carried on the rear surface 7 of the door 2. When operated the lock or catch 6 engages with the frame 1, as shown in the drawing. Access to the lock or catch 6 to operate it is via an aperture 8 in the front surface 9 of the door 2. An escutcheon 10 is provided behind the aperture 8 and is pivotable about a hinge pin 11 between a first position in which the aperture 8 is open and the lock or catch 6 positioned behind it is accessible and a second position in which the aperture is closed. The escutcheon is normally biased into the second, closed position by resilient biasing means 12, which may comprise a leaf spring or similar device.

The surface of the escutcheon 10 facing the aperture 8 defines a projection 13 which is of the same shape and thickness as the aperture 8 itself. This projection 13 is positioned so that it engages in the aperture 8 and fills it when the escutcheon 10 is in the second, closed position. The outwardly facing surface of this projection 13 preferably matches that of the front surface 9 of the door 2 so that the aperture 8 is effectively concealed when the escutcheon 10 is in the second, closed position.

In use, the lock or catch 6 is accessed is achieved by pushing a key or other operating device against the escutcheon 10 through the aperture 8. This causes the escutcheon 10 to swing rearwardly about the hinge pin 11 and out of the path of the key to the lock or catch 6. The lock or catch can then be operated to release the door 2 within the frame 1. When it is required to secure the door 2 within the frame 1, the key is withdrawn which allows the escutcheon 10 to swing back over the aperture 8 under the

action of the spring biasing means 12.

In the access panel of the present invention the spring biased escutcheon ensures that the aperture through which the lock or catch is accessed is always closed when not in use and further, is effectively concealed.

5 Also the escutcheon 10 may be pivotable about the rear face of 9 and not sprung to achieve the same effect.

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CLAIMS

1. An access panel comprising a frame adapted in use to be mounted in an aperture in a false wall or ceiling, a door mounted within the frame, and a lock or catch mounted on a rear surface of the door and engageable with the frame to secure the door in a closed position within the frame, which lock or catch is accessible through an aperture in the front surface of the door, wherein the said aperture is normally closed by an escutcheon mounted behind the said aperture.

2. An access panel according to claim 1, wherein the escutcheon is pivotable about a hinge or pivot pin enabling it to swing rearwardly from the aperture to allow unimpeded access to the lock or catch lying beyond it.

3. An access panel according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the escutcheon is resiliently biased towards the said aperture so that it is normally closed by it.

4. An access panel according to claim 1, 2 or 3, wherein the escutcheon defines a projection of the same shape and thickness as the aperture, which projection engages in the said aperture when the escutcheon is in the normally closed position.

5. An access panel according to claim 4, wherein the surface of the said projection matches that of the front surface of the door so that the aperture is effectively concealed when the escutcheon is in the normally closed position.

6. An access panel according to claim 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5, wherein the door is double-skinned and the lock or catch is mounted on the rear skin thereof, whilst the said aperture is formed in the front skin thereof.

7. An access panel according to claim 6, wherein the escutcheon is positioned between the two skins and is pivotable away from the said aperture into the space defined between the two skins.

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Application No: GB 0223596.8
Claims searched: 1-7

Examiner: Eleanor Wade
Date of search: 19 December 2003

Patents Act 1977 : Search Report under Section 17

Documents considered to be relevant:

Category	Relevant to claims	Identity of document and passage or figure of particular relevance	
Y	1-3	GB 2186022	Builders Merchants
Y	1-3	GB 823288	Lilly & Sons Ltd
A	-	US 5595028	Handzlik
A	-	WO 0060191	Cabscape Holdings Pty Ltd
A	-	EP 0744509	Geel Syst BV

Categories:

X	Document indicating lack of novelty or inventive step	A	Document indicating technological background and/or state of the art.
Y	Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of same category.	P	Document published on or after the declared priority date but before the filing date of this invention.
&	Member of the same patent family	E	Patent document published on or after, but with priority date earlier than, the filing date of this application.

Field of Search:

Search of GB, EP, WO & US patent documents classified in the following areas of the UKC^v:

E1D, E1J, E2X

Worldwide search of patent documents classified in the following areas of the IPC⁷:

E04B, E04F, E06B

The following online and other databases have been used in the preparation of this search report:

EPODOC, JAPIO, WPI